

# Messenger!

## A Journey Through the Burden of Malachi

### Malachi 3:7-12

### 11- All the Nations Will Call You “Blessed!”

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November 10, 2019

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**7 "From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'**

**8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings.**

**9 "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!***

**10 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.**

**11 "Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*," says the Lord of hosts.**

**12 "All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the Lord of hosts.**

To the Glory of God

Now there is a lot that has been written and spoken about the Issue of “Money”, in general, and “Tithing”, in specific. And once again, I find myself challenged to preach a single Sermon about a very important Subject. So, let me divide this Sermon into four Questions:

1. Why was Tithing such an important Issue to God during Malachi’s Day?
2. Is Tithing an Issue for us today?
3. If not, what has *replaced* the Tithe?

4. How can we become a "Land of Delight" where all the Nations will call us "Blessed" in our day?

... so, let's look at these four Questions.

## **1. Why was Tithing such an Important Issue to God during Malachi's Day?**

Now, the Reality is that God's people giving 10% started way *before* God instituted "Tithing" in the Law of Moses. For example, in **Genesis 14**, the Patriarch, Abram, met a strange man by the name of *Melchizedek*, who was a "**Priest of God most High**", after Abraham returned from a great battle. And Moses was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to write this in **Genesis 14:19&20**:

**He (Melchizedek) blessed him (Abram) and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He (Abram) gave him (Melchizedek) a tenth of all.**

Now, from **Hebrews 7**, we know that Melchizedek was actually a "Pre-incarnate manifestation" of Jesus Christ on the earth (*Theophany*). And the Argument of the writer of **Hebrews** was that since Abram "paid tithes" to Jesus, this meant that Jesus was *superior* to Abraham. And then he went even further and said that since Levi was in the loins of Abram, that Levi (who was the Father of all the Levitical Priests) also "paid tithes" to Jesus, showing that Jesus' eternal Priesthood was *infinitely* superior to the human priesthood of Levi. This biblical logic was used to develop what is now called "*The Federal Headship Argument*", which has been useful to prove, not only the *superiority* of the New Covenant, but this Argument was also used to develop the "Doctrine of Original Sin."<sup>1</sup>

Now notice that Moses wrote that Abram gave Melchizedek a "tenth of all". But, in context, the "all" that Abram tithed was probably only the "spoils of war" that Abram took from that single conflict,

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<sup>1</sup> Primarily, Augustine used this Argument against Pelagius in the fourth and fifth Centuries to refute Pelagius' heresy. But it was also used to develop the Doctrine of Original Sin.

because there is no record that Abram ever gave a tenth of anything else his entire life. Now he *might* have, but the Bible is silent about it.

Also, in **Genesis 28:20-22**, we read:

**Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God. "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."**

... and many people use this Passage to teach the Tithe. But let's examine this for a moment. What exactly was Jacob promising to God? He said:

- **IF** God will be with me
- **IF** God will keep me on this journey
- **IF** God will give me food to eat and garments to wear
- **IF** God will allow me to return to my father's house in safety
  
- **THEN** the Lord will be my God
- **THEN** this stone... will be the House of God
- **THEN** I will give to God a tenth...

Okay, fine. But this Vow *also* means:

**IF** God doesn't... **THEN** I won't

... which, I would suggest to you is "first cousin" to outright blasphemy. So, if God had the audacity to act in any way that doesn't please Jacob, then Jacob will NOT lay claim to God being his God, the Stone will NOT be the House of God, and Jacob won't give *anything* to God. So, this is a *horrible* way to establish a "Spiritual Principle". Jacob is "bargaining" with God here, which in itself is a Sin. But the *way* Jacob bargains gives us insight into the wicked and self-centered heart that Jacob had. So, I would be very reluctant to teach *anyone anything* about "Giving to God" using either Jacob or this Passage.

Now the English word "*Tithe*" comes from the Hebrew word (*maaser*; Strongs #4643), and simply means: "*a tenth*". And, under the

Law, Moses was “moved along” by God the Holy Spirit to *require* the people to “pay” Tithes to the Levites, and the Levites were *commanded* to “take” “Tithes” from the people.

Now we need to remember that, back then, Israel was a “Theocracy”, which is a system where the Church and the Government are the same. And so, the Tithe is best understood as a “Tax” on the people. So, the Government took Taxes from the people and ran the Government, the Nation, and the Church.

Now most people think that the ancient Jews paid 10% of all that they had to the Rulers of the nation of Israel, both spiritual and secular. But the reality is that there were various *kinds* of Tithe. And Tithing was also carried out at various times. And so, the real percentage was much closer to 25%, which is about what our modern taxation is today.

Now the correct way to understand how the Tithe functioned is that the people “paid” their Tithes, and the Government/Church “took” the Tithe. So, the Tithe was *mandatory*. It was *owed*. It was *required*. And there really wasn’t any “Giving” by anyone until all the Tithe was “paid”. So, only after “paying” his required Tax could an individual actually “give” to God.

Another thing we need to keep in mind, when reading and studying the Old Testament, is that people paid their Tithes in other things besides money; crops, animals, seed, even real estate were “paid” as Tithes under the Old Covenant.

So, at least 1,000 years before God raised up Malachi, Tithing was established by God as the way that He was going to finance both His Natural and Spiritual exploits in the earth. It was set in concrete. There was no confusion about it. Tithing had been in effect for many, many Centuries before Malachi was ever born.

Now as I told you in the very first Sermon, the “Burden” of Malachi was the various Sins of God’s people that were going on in Israel about 400 years before Jesus was born. And the Book of Malachi is a series of Divine Indictments where God charges the people with various Transgressions. And we have already seen several of them:

- ✓ They denied God’s Love
- ✓ They were offering God lame and diseased animals
- ✓ The Levites were teaching false Doctrine

- ✓ The people were not honoring Promises and Covenants and Contracts with each other
- ✓ Divorce was rampant
- ✓ They were saying that God was no longer Righteous

.. and now, in verse 7, God, through Malachi, issues yet another Divine Indictment:

**Malachi 3:7a**

**From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept *them*.**

... and, yes, like all the other Indictments, God gives His people great Hope by saying:

**Malachi 3:7b**

**... Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts...**

... but, just like with all the other Indictments, the Jew of that day was so distant from God, so unaware of God's Will and Way, that the people were incredulous that God would even be disturbed with them...

**Malachi 3:7c**

**... But you say, 'How shall we return?'**

The fact that they denied God's Love, the fact that they were giving God animals that had broken legs and mange, the fact that they were neck deep in false Doctrine, the fact that they were not honoring their commitments, the fact that Divorce was commonplace among them, the fact that they were accusing God of no longer caring about Evil, didn't seem to alert them that they were in trouble with God. But even with all that raw Sin going on, they were absolutely flabbergasted that God would tell them to "return to Him".

This shows us what Sin does to our minds. Sin really does make people to be stupid. Above all the people on the face of the earth the Jew *knew* what God required of them. God had favored the Jew above all the nations of the earth. He had given them their land, their language, their culture, their Government, and their religion. God Himself chose the Jew to be His people *to the exclusion* of every other

group of people on earth. And yet, during Malachi's Ministry, they *dishonored* God *blatantly, willfully, and repeatedly*. But, to add Insult to Injury, as they sinned against Him, they were all so amazed that God would be unhappy about it.

But when they asked God, "**How shall we return?**", look at how God responded in **Malachi 3:8&9**:

**Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!**

Now the way God responds here shows us how vital the connection is between our Money and our Souls. More than almost any other commodity on earth, a person's Relationship with God can be measured by the way he handles his Money/Possessions. For example, a person, who looks for ways to NOT give to God, a person who justifies being stingy with God, a person who seeks avenues to withhold giving to God, is a person who has little or no love for God.

Now, in almost every quarter, Sinning with regard to Money/Possessions has been relegated to basically two types:

1. *Stealing* Money/Possessions
2. *Loving* Money/Possessions

...and both of those are, indeed, terrible Sins. We are told to labor so that we can accumulate what we have *honestly*, and NOT take what doesn't belong to us. But we are also told to not allow our hearts to place our Affections on Money, to not *love* Money, to not look at Money *inappropriately*, such as being the "Solution" of all our troubles, and the great "Giver" of both Peace and Happiness. Because that Position is reserved solely for Jesus.

But the Bible goes even further to teach a *third* Sin with regard to Money:

3. NOT *giving* Money/Possessions

The Bible doesn't teach that we are to labor so we can honestly earn what we have, so we can provide for our families AND accumulate

more of this world's Goods, period. Rather, we are to labor, so we can honestly earn what we have so that we can provide for our families AND, so we can give to God and to others. The Apostle Paul was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to write to the saints at Ephesus:

**Ephesians 4:28**

**He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.**

... and that means that the person who labors, honestly, to provide for his family, so he can accumulate more of this world's Goods, and yet does NOT give to God or to others, is sinning. He is doing *exactly* what Malachi condemned the ancient Jew for doing:

**"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings.**

So, NOT giving is the same thing as "robbing God". And look what the result is for robbing God:

**"You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!"**

... and what is *more* horrible than being cursed by God is being cursed by God while you *think* you are being blessed by God. Robbing God makes you to be cursed by God. And yet, the Jew of Malachi's Day thought that God was with him, and that God was pleased with him. This is a level of deception that is frightening.

We must understand that as we seek to rebel against God and His Word, we go to God trying to either talk God into what we want, or to see if we can get God to not pay any attention to what we want to do. But God is faithful, and He looks us in the eye, and He says, "*No! Don't do it! That Sin dishonors Me and it is destructive to you. And I want the Best for you, and the Best for you is Me. And that Sin will separate Me from you. So, don't do it!*" But we really *want* to engage in that Sin, and, so, we go back to God, and we ask again. And again, God through His Spirit and through His Word tells us clearly: "*No! Don't do it!*" But we *really, really* desire that Sin. And so, we go back to God

over and over again. And we ask over and over again. And, God faithfully tells us, “No!”

But that isn't the *worst thing*. Being told, “No!” by God is NOT the *worst thing* that can happen to us. No, the *worst thing, the most frightening thing*, is that the Bible teaches that there is a point, after *repeated* attempts at restricting our behavior, that God will finally say, “Go ahead. Knock yourself out. Do whatever is in your heart to do!” So, we have *spurned* the Love of God, we have *resisted* God's Grace, and we have *sought* to rebel against Him, in spite of *repeated* Warnings from both the indwelling Spirit and the infallible Word of the living God (and probably other believers as well). And at that point, the Cares of Life, the Deceitfulness of Riches, and the Lust of Other Things literally “chokes the Word of God” until the Word has no effect on our lives. Our conscience has been hardened to the point where the Conviction of the Holy Spirit is too weak to prevail. And so, we rush headlong into Sin. We run *enthusiastically* into the very jaws of satan himself.

And the Bible says that, at that moment, God *passively* “steps aside” and *allows* that to happen. This is what it means in **Romans 1**, when, three times, the Bible says that God “**gave them up**” to the lusts of their own hearts. And this is what Paul was talking about when he said in **1 Timothy 4:1&2**:

**But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,**

... this is what was going on with the people of Malachi's Day. They thought, since they were chosen, and since Abraham was their Father, that it didn't matter how they lived their lives, that it didn't matter whether they gave God the best Sacrifices, that it didn't matter that they were denying God's Love, that it didn't matter that they were not honoring contracts and promises and vows they had made, that it didn't matter how they were treating their wives, and that it didn't matter that they were robbing God.

The deception they had about what Salvation really was blinded them to the Reality that belonging to God meant that how they lived their lives mattered. So, these people were categorically wrong about



the only really important Subject: what it means to belong to God. And so, they were deceived about the Fact that true, genuine Salvation, that was brought about solely by Grace and through Faith, was proven, it was manifested, it was made real by how they lived their lives.

But in His great Concern for the people on whom He had sat His Love, God, through Malachi, gave the Jew of that day the Solution to the Curse:

### **Malachi 3:10a**

**Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house...**

*"Cease your theft! Stop robbing Me! Pay what you owe! Stop your rebelling and submit yourself to Me and to My Ways!"* And then God gave them an amazing Divine Incentive, a series of Promises that God Himself would do *for* them, and *in* them, and *to* them, if they would simply bow their knees to Him and give what He required from them:

**... and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. "Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*," says the Lord of hosts.**

... so, two Promises:

- 1. I will... open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows**
- 2. I will rebuke the devourer for you...**

... and what would be the Result of these two Promises being fulfilled through their Obedience in their giving?

- 1. it [the devourer] will not destroy the fruits of the ground**
- 2. your vine [will not] cast *its grapes* in the field**

... and what would be the ultimate Result of these Blessings from God being received by the Jew and seen by the unbelieving Gentile peoples of the world?

## **Malachi 3:12**

**"All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the Lord of hosts.**

... now this all sounds very cut and dried:

- ✓ Rob God of the Tithes and Offerings, and you are cursed with a Curse.
- ✓ Pay all your Tithes, and God will bless you.

... and that was what was taught, and what was practiced under the First or the Old Covenant. God had set up the Nation of Israel as a "Sign" to the world of what the Glory of God looked like. So, the Jew was chosen to display the Glory of God's Grace to the unbelieving world, so the Gentiles could see how utterly magnificent God was. And the way that God *financed* this was through a system of Taxation called "Tithing".

So, the Old Covenant was a "*Come and See Religion*." The Nations of the world were told to make the trip to Israel, to Jerusalem, to the Temple, so they could "See" God in His Glory. And so, the entire lost world was told, by God, to "Come and See My Holiness" displayed by the Jew being "set apart" (Holy) from every other Nation on earth. And Tithing allowed that to happen. And *that* is why taxing the Jewish people with Tithing was so important to God.

## **2. Is Tithing an Issue with Us Today?**

But I have a series of Questions about Tithing under the Old Covenant:

- ✓ Exactly how does *requiring* the "payment" of a Tax make God look glorious?
- ✓ Are we to assume that we can "purchase" God's Blessings by our giving?
- ✓ Would God not look infinitely MORE glorious if He would change me so that I truly *desired* to give?

Now let me begin this part of the Sermon by committing "Ministerial Suicide" by this Statement:

**The 27 Books of the New Testament do NOT Advocate, promote, teach, or illustrate Tithing**

Many fellow-Pastors tell me all the time not to tell you this. They say, "*If the people knew that they don't have to tithe, then giving would just dry up completely.*" But I have made a solemn vow to God and to you to preach the whole Counsel of God. And the Reality is that there is a completely *new*, and *unique*, and *different*, and *better*, and *higher* Dynamic at work with how we are to handle "Money and God" within the New Covenant that the Old Covenant pointed to but was never able to realize in fullness. And to grasp this, we have to understand a very simple comparison between the two Covenants.

The Old Covenant was established only for a period of time. *All* of its Requirements and Ceremonies and Rituals and Sacrifices and Sabbaths were NEVER designed to be permanent. What WAS Permanent was God in His Triune Persons. So, neither the Old nor the New Covenants are Absolute or Final. What is Absolute and Final is God. God is the ultimate Reality.

And that means that God is *better* than the Universe and the Galaxies and the Stars. God is *better* than the earth and the fullness of the earth. God is *better* than human life. God is *better* than Money and Possessions. And most people would agree with that. That is *why* King David said in **Psalm 24:1**,

**The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.**

So, God created the Universe not to be an end in itself, but to merely reflect His Own magnificent Worth and Importance. He created all that is "non-God" to show the Beauty and Glory of *Himself*. And in the New Covenant, all of God's Attributes and all of God's Qualities and all of God's Glory is found in the "Face" or in the "Person" of Jesus Christ. So, Jesus is the very *Best* in all the Universe. Jesus is *better* than life, He is *better* than death, He is *better* than silver or gold. He is *better* than super-novas, and He is *better* than sub-atomic particles.

Jesus is *better* than *anything* that this world can give to us, and He is *better* than *anything* this world can take away from us.

But what many people have not considered very much is that Jesus is also *better* than Heaven. The streets of gold, the pearly gates, and being re-united with loved ones would really be nothing more than a nice vacation spot if it weren't for the Lamb. Look at how the Apostle John was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to describe Jesus in relation to Heaven in **The Revelation 21:22&23**:

**I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.**

So, the Primary Goal of God in Salvation is NOT that we will simply miss Hell. The Primary Goal of God is NOT that we will simply live forever in Heaven with a new body, and that we will never be sick again, and that we will never be hungry again, and that we will never cry again. The Primary Goal of God in Salvation is NOT merely that we will be Forgiven and made Righteous. All that is true and wonderful and Good and delightful, but *none* of that is the Primary Goal of God in Salvation

No, the Primary Goal of God in Salvation is God. God's *ultimate* Allegiance is NOT to us, or to His Creation, but to *Himself*. God burns with a never-ending, always expanding, white-hot Passion to radically change unworthy sinners (by what He alone does for them) so that we will have the incredible Privilege and Honor to "see" or "behold" Jesus in His absolute, infinite Beauty, and that we will obtain the fullness of our own JOY in what we see.

More than anything else, God desires to be seen, and known, and marveled at, and understood, and valued, and treasured, and worshipped, and adored, and loved, above and beyond all that He has wondrously created.

And Sin stops that from happening. And that is why Jesus had to come and be born of a virgin, live a sinless Life, die a vicarious Death, and rise again on the third day. So, the New Covenant is *infinitely* better than the Old in both what it *gives* and in what it *promises*.

For example, the First or the Old Covenant was between God and Man. God said, "*If you do this, then I will do that.*" So, for example, as

Malachi teaches: *"If you pay all of your Tithes to God, then God will pour out a Blessing upon you. But if you don't, then you are cursed with a Curse."*

The Problem with the Old Covenant was NOT that it was Evil or of the devil. It wasn't. The Old Covenant was from God. And it was true. And it was Holy, Righteous, and Good. But it was also *Incomplete*. All it did was to tell us what we had to do to be Righteous and *deserving* of God's Blessings. So, the Old Covenant was all about being *driven* to obey Commandments.

The New Covenant is infinitely *better* because it dealt with the *real* Problem, the *basic* Problem, the *only* Problem with fallen Man; our lack of Love for God. You see, from the very beginning, this was God's Plan:

### **Deuteronomy 6:4&5**

**Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**

So, when the Old Covenant *demand*ed Obedience, it received a *form* of Obedience. But it never got Love. It got a "*Forced Obedience*", and it got a "*Fearful Obedience*". But it never obtained the Original and Primary Goal of God: a "*Joyful Obedience*", a "*Glad Obedience*". It never attained to what God desires more than anything else: "*Obedience based in Love.*" So, the Law *command*ed, and the Law *order*ed, and the Law *comp*elled, and the Law *requ*ired, and the Law *threat*ened. And human beings *respon*ded. They responded with Fear, and with Duty, and with Obligation, and with lots and lots of Human Effort. But human beings did not find the fullness of Joy in any of those Ordinances and Statutes and Commandments. And so, people did not *delight* themselves in God. They did not *enjoy* God. They did not *obey* out of Love. And they did not *give* out of Love. Rather they *cower*ed in Fear, and in Reluctance, and in Trepidation. But look what God promised in the New Covenant:

### **Ezekiel 36:22b&23**

**... "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, 'It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. 'I will vindicate**

**the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.**

God says here that, since the Jew, who lived under the First or the Old Covenant, had utterly *failed* to magnify the "Name" or the "Reputation" of God throughout the earth (precisely because they could NOT keep the Commandments perfectly), that God Himself, *all by Himself*, would do something *amazing*, something *breathtaking*, something *sovereignly*, to "vindicate the Holiness of His Own great Name which they had failed to do."

Wow! Well, this must really be something huge! This must be something earthshaking! This has to be something that has never happened before in order to vindicate the Holiness of God's great Name. So, what is God going to do?

#### **Ezekiel 36:24-27a**

**For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you...**

Now all that Ezekiel talks about here is what we call "Grace". And notice that God is the only One Who is doing anything here. And that is the Beauty of the New Covenant. Because, while the Old Covenant was between God and Man, the New Covenant is between God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Human beings don't do *anything* here. God is the sole Being Who acts in these verses. And notice that God doesn't give any new Commandments here. God doesn't give new Rules, or new Ordinances. Because that isn't our problem. Our Problem is we need a new heart. And the New Covenant promises that. But look what God said next:

#### **Ezekiel 36:25-27**

**I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a**

**new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**

Now look again closely at that last verse. God said:

**I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes...**

So, about 500 years before Jesus was born, or about 100 years before Malachi prophesied his Burden, God promised that He was going to bring in a "New" Covenant that would be *infinitely* better than the Old Covenant. And these are the Characteristics of the New Covenant that make it so much better than the Old, because in it God has promised:

- ✓ **I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols**
- ✓ **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you**
- ✓ **I will put My Spirit within you...**

... over and over and over, God says, *"I will do this, and I will do that, and then I will also do this, all by Myself"*. And then, to top it off, look what God said next:

**and [I will] cause you to walk in My statutes**

The New Covenant promises new eyes that have been "unveiled" so they can see the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. The New Covenant promises new ears that can hear the Sound of Amazing Grace. The New Covenant promises a new heart that loves God and the things of God. The New Covenant promises that we will possess a new spirit that *desires* to obey, and that *desires* to follow, and that *desires* to serve, and that *desires* to love, and that *desires* to give. And finally, God has promised, that, in the New Covenant, God will put His Own Spirit inside of us!

So, we will never have to travel again to Jerusalem to worship God in the Temple, because we have become the Temple of the Holy Spirit! And look what God has promised He will do *in* us, and *through* us, and *for* us, as He fills us with His Spirit:

**and [I will] cause you to walk in My statutes**

God will *force* us, He will *compel* us, He will *cause* us to walk in His Statutes. God will personally “see to it” that His people obey Him. And what will be the net result of all this?

**... and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**

... you will be careful, you will make sure, you will order your life, in such a way that observing God’s Ordinances is simply what you do. And I would suggest to you that giving to God with a transformed heart like that is the easiest thing in the world to do.

**3. If Tithing is NOT an Issue with us today, then what has *replaced* it?**

So, the New Covenant that is established on *infinitely* better Promises, and that was brought about by an *infinitely* better Sacrifice, that was offered by an *infinitely* better High Priest, - results NOT in new Rules, or new Commandments, or new Threats, or new Punishments, but in a new heart, and a new spirit, and a transformed nature.

So, the New Covenant is a “Go and Tell Religion”. Because, the Goal of God is Worship. God desires that people, from every tongue and tribe and language and race and ethnic group worship Him throughout all Eternity. And Evangelism happens because Worship doesn’t. But the New Covenant doesn’t say “Come and See”, it says “God and Tell”. We take the glorious Gospel and we herald it throughout the world.

And the Response that we have, that which we tell the world, that is based in all that God Himself has sovereignly done in us, and for us, and through us, is a new Delight, a new Enjoyment, a new Love, a new Satisfaction, a new Fulfillment, where we truly find the fullness of our own Joy in “Glad Obedience”, “Joyful Obedience”, “Humble Obedience”, and “Delighted Obedience”. So, when we stand before God, and God asks us why we did what we did for His Glory all throughout our life, we will respond:



Nothing made me happier than to live my life  
*exclusively* for Your Glory!

Nothing on this earth brought me more Joy, nothing this world offered me allowed me to experience the level of Delight and Enjoyment than being submitted to You and Your Will. So, when wicked rebels can be so radically transformed (by what God alone has done), where that Statement is true, God can be truly seen as the Treasure of the Universe.

So, how do you think fallen human beings, who were born in Sin, and who were conceived in Iniquity, but who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth and truly become people who would gladly die rather than dishonor Jesus Christ, how do you suppose those kind of people think about their Money in relation to God? Do you think that they consider things like Duty or Obligation? No, here is the very strange way that the Holy Bible describes the new Dynamic about Money and God in **2 Corinthians 9:**

**For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, *namely*, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared; otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we — not to speak of you — will be put to shame by this confidence. So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness. Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, "**HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER.**" Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service**

**is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!**

So, Old Covenant "Tithing" has been *superseded* with New Covenant "Giving". The Old Covenant Command to "pay Tithes" has been replaced with the New Covenant "cheerful Giving" out of a grateful and transformed heart. The Old Covenant mentality of "Forced Obedience" based in Commandments written on tables of stone has given way to the New Covenant mentality of "Joyful Obedience" based in Love, brought about by a new nature. 10% has been replaced with "Liberality". A "set amount" has yielded to unlimited expressions of Thankfulness. Duty and Obligation has given way to Delight and Joy. And our Fear of Divine Punishment has been replaced with Rejoicing that all of God's Wrath against all of our Sins has been forever cast away, and all that God has for us now is Grace and Love and Mercy!

Now some of the old Dynamic still holds. The way a person acts with his Money is still very reflective of his relationship with God. And, if anything, that Reality has become even MORE true under the New Covenant. But what we always need to keep in mind is that EVERYTHING under the New Covenant, literally EVERYTHING that flows out from God to us, and then that flows out from us back to God, EVERYTHING is bathed in Love. NOTHING is done out of Coercion. NOTHING is done through the Fear of Punishment. EVERYTHING we do, all that we say, how we think, how we raise our children, how we treat our wives, how we live our lives, how we understand Politics and Government and Law, and how we handle our Money, is carried out for one Primary Goal, so that Jesus Christ will be seen as the Treasure of the Universe!

#### **4. How Can We Become a Delightful Land Where All the Nations Call us "Blessed"?**

Malachi began his Burden with these words:

## Malachi 1:2a

### I have loved you, says the Lord...

And what that means is that, before the Foundation of the world, before we were born, before we did anything Good or Evil, with absolutely no consideration how much Sin we had committed, God determined to "set His Love" upon us. And this is what the Bible means when it talks about people being "chosen" or "predestinated" or "elected" or "called to Salvation".

Many people today will say, *"God saved me because He loved me"*. And that is an absolutely correct Statement. And we rejoice over that. But this Statement is woefully incomplete. And by being incomplete, a Statement like that gives people the wrong impression. In fact, a Statement like that gives people a sinful, idolatrous, and blasphemous impression that is completely contrary to everything the Bible teaches. Left alone, a Statement like that tells people that we are the primary focus of God, and that we are the single most important Commodity in the Universe to God. And whereas that might make us all feel warm and fuzzy, Statements like that hide the Real Goal of God in Salvation.

What we should say is: *"God saved me because He loved me, so that by saving me, I will love Him"*. This correctly reflects that God's Focus is that He alone is glorified, *especially* in Salvation. And Sin stop us from glorifying God. So, Salvation allows for us to be radically and eternally *transformed*, so that we will find the fullness of our Joy in glorifying God, forever. And before the visible church became so Man-centered five hundred years ago, the Westminster Catechism talked like that. And this Catechism begins with this Question and Answer:

**Q:** What is the Chief End of Man?

**A:** The Chief End of Man is to know God, love God and enjoy Him, forever.

And this very simple but very profound Issue is best summarized in a very short little verse found in **1 John 4:19**, that says:

### We love because He first loved us

... and the context that John was dealing with is *why* saved human beings love God, and *why* we love the things of God, and *why* we love

each other, and *why* the lost world doesn't. And the Answer in this verse tells us that the Reason, the Sole Reason, the Only Reason we love God, and the lost world doesn't is NOT because of some nobility or some internal Goodness that we possess in ourselves. No, John taught here that the Catalyst, the Initiation, the Origination of our Love for God is God's Love for us, FIRST.

In other words, sinful human being didn't suddenly "decide" to start loving God. We didn't just "choose" to love God. We didn't rub the two sticks of our own "human intellect" and our own "will-power" together to *manufacture* a Love for God. No, the Fall *destroyed* any ability that any of us had to love God. And so, John says here that our Love FOR God is a Gift FROM God. That God *granted* us, He *gifted* us, He *empowered* and *enabled* us to be able (and willing) to love Him.

And, if that has truly happened, if we truly have been gifted with a Love for God, then we cannot help but *respond* to that Love with things like Words and Songs and Thoughts and Actions. And the *accumulation* of those Words and Songs and Thoughts and Actions is called "Worship". So, Worship is NOT the song service on Sunday Morning. Worship is the moment by moment human response to the great and magnificent Work that God has done through Jesus Christ, in us and for us and through us. So, I define Worship as being:

**Struggling against the various lusts of my flesh, by the Power of the Holy Spirit, to be found humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture, in my daily life, all to the Glory of God.**

The world has seen religious hypocrites. The world has seen charlatans posing as religious leaders. The world has seen pried pipers playing a soothing tune as they lead the sheep to slaughter. The world has seen the *Americanization* of Christianity and the *Politicization* of Christianity and the *Professionalism* of Christianity. But when the world sees real, genuine Christians, when the lost world sees true bond-slaves of Jesus, when the pagan world sees people who are truly worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth, when the world sees that, when they observe NOT *perfect* people, but *struggling* people, people who are *genuinely* and *honestly* and *continually* warring against the desires of their own flesh, and warring against the system of this fallen world,

and warring against the desires and devices of the devil, to humbly and joyfully prove that Jesus is the Treasure of the Universe, by bowing their knees to the Authority of what God has already revealed in the 66 Books of the Holy Bible, NOT as they sit in Church on the Lord's Day, but on Monday mornings and on Wednesday afternoons and on Friday evenings, and they do all this NOT so that people will think much of them, but so that they will think much of Jesus, then those people are *proving* that silver and gold are not their idols. They are *proving* that Jesus is more valuable to them than Money. They are *proving* that Jesus is the Lilly of their Valley, the bright and morning Star, the beautiful Rose of Sharon, and the Fairest of ten thousand to their soul.

And when, by God's Grace and to God's Glory, these people Worship as they suffer, as they are persecuted, as they burn, the world has to agree with them that this is simply NOT normal, and that, truly, God has done a magnificent Work in them and that this is way beyond human choice or human decision, but this reveals a Sovereign Act of God.

And the Bible says that when they see this, when they come into contact with a person who is dead earnest about living his life to the Glory of God, the Bible says they will marvel and acknowledge God. 2,000 years ago, the incarnate God Himself said:

**Matthew 5:16**

**Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

... and 500 years before that, in **Isaiah 60:14&15**, the Prophet said:

**The sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you, And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet; And they will call you the city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated With no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, A joy from generation to generation.**

When the pagan world sees genuine believers who have been made white by the Blood of the Lamb, who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and who live with abandon in this radical Love for Jesus, it will affect them. Some will be saved. And others, who will never bow

will, nevertheless, acknowledge that, of a Truth, God has done something marvelous in us and for us and through us. And they will say, *"The Lord is with you!"* And, on that day, we will be a delightful Land, and the nations of the world will call us *"Blessed!"*

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.